

# Renton's Black Pioneers

By Tom Monahan

The term "pioneer" is most often used to describe those who venture into wilderness areas and build cabins from rough-hewn logs. To most people, the name conjures up images of bearded men with flint lock rifles, dressed in deerskin clothing. But the word "pioneer" can also refer to someone who initiates a new area of enterprise that no one like them had attempted before. February was Black History Month, but it's worthwhile thinking about this part of Renton's history all year round. This article takes a brief look at the lives of some of the first African Americans to put down roots in Renton. Their experiences while trying to make a home here can serve as an inspiration for all, while still revealing aspects unique to their culture and heritage.



Above: Lime Kiln Club, Newcastle Black Miner's Association, 1890. (Renton History Museum Collection, #1984.075.1887)

Masthead: African-American and white miners, Newcastle Coal Mines, 1880. (Doreen Greggs Dabotten Collection, Renton History Museum, #1983.074.1780)

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### Renton Historical Quarterly

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Renton History Museum  
235 Mill Avenue South  
Renton, WA 98057  
Phone: 425.255.2330  
FAX: 425.255.1570

### Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday 10:00am - 4:00pm  
**Admission:** \$3 for adults  
\$1 for children

Always free to members and to the general public on the first Wednesday and third Saturday of the month.

**Board Meetings:** Please call the museum for time and location.



# Renton Museum Report

By Elizabeth P. Stewart

Dear friends,

I'm writing this around the one-year anniversary of my interview for the job as Director—we historians tend to recall these things. I've been thinking about the fact that one of the things about the Renton History Museum I was really impressed with was the community involvement in the life and work of the museum. Volunteers participate in every kind of project here—we couldn't do what we do without them and volunteers have every right to be proud of their contributions.



Dorota keeps us informed about the volunteers in every newsletter, but I don't think many people know how important interns are to the museum's work, and what a difference the museum has made in their lives as well. Start with our own Collection Manager, Sarah Iles, who began her association with the Renton History Museum as an intern from UW's Museology program in 2004. During her internship, Sarah catalogued the museum's jewelry collection and worked extensively with the Custer Collection. Her work was invaluable to the museum, at a time when staff had no idea how they'd find time to tackle such a huge collection. But these internships also had a benefit for her; her work in our collection became her M.A. thesis project. Another UW Museology student, Benny Eisman, has joined us this year to work on a new coal mining exhibit in the main gallery—we'll keep you posted as it develops!

Willamette University student Eric Haddenham worked here during Christmas break, digging out all the photos relating to coal mining from among our 13,000+ photographs and gathering them into a reference notebook by subject. He doggedly stuck with what might have been a pretty dull project for him, knowing that his work would be used in the coal mining exhibit and in new curricular materials for teachers to use. Eric has worked with us for two summers running, assisting with the cataloguing of the Kennydale School Collection, so we knew he was fully capable of any project we gave him.

Also over Christmas break, Cal Poly graphic arts student Andrew Santos-Johnson developed a stunning poster for inclusion in an exhibit showcasing over 30 Seattle-area museums at the History House in Fremont. Don't miss our poster in this exhibit, on display until Labor Day—it turned out to be great marketing for us, and a nice piece for Andrew's portfolio!

You can tell from these examples what great opportunities the Renton History Museum has to offer for young people looking for their first professional experience in historical research, graphic design, public relations, exhibit design, and many other areas of museum work! And what a wonderful chance for museum staff to mentor young people!

*Liz Stewart*

For more information about "34 Unique Museums of King County," visit the History House website at

<http://www.historyhouse.org/>.

The exhibit will be open until Labor Day,  
Wednesday - Sunday  
noon - 5:00 p.m.

## **2007 Heritage Conference: "The Dollars and Sense of Heritage"**

In February Director Liz Stewart and Collections Manager Sarah Iles attended the biannual Washington Heritage Conference, three days of workshops and panel discussions about the documentation, preservation, and interpretation of history in our state. This year's theme—"The Dollars and Sense of Heritage"—was aimed at helping all of us understand the economic and financial aspects of heritage practice these days. First, speakers from the Association of King County Heritage Organizations (AKCHO) and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) reported on their studies of the economic benefits of preservation and museum activities. Second, numerous speakers discussed ways to do more with less by creating partnerships with other organizations.

The results of studies done by AKCHO and the DAHP were surprising, and provide extra evidence for all of us who believe that heritage efforts are beneficial to communities in tangible ways. In a survey of its member organizations, AKCHO discovered that in 2004 historic sites and museums served 3147 schools by hosting 203,704 student visits and 2299 teacher visits—that's 996 educational visits a day, every weekday! Heritage organizations also provided stimulating experiences for tourists. The survey showed that 320 historic sites around the county attracted 584,706 visitors in 2004. The DAHP reports that in Washington state as a whole these "heritage tourists"—folks who travel primarily to visit historic sites and museums—spent an estimated 8.7 million visitor days in 2004, generating an estimated \$1.3 billion for the state's economy and supporting 20,000 jobs!

The DAHP also studied the advantages that the rehabilitation of old buildings has over demolition. Between 2000 and 2004, historic preservation activities generated annual sales of \$221 million and supported 2320 jobs. Historic rehabilitation had a higher benefit to the economy than many key sectors, including aerospace, wood products, and the overall construction industry. The DAHP study also debunked the myth that historic house designation reduces property values; property values in Bellingham's and Tacoma's historic districts, for example, actually increased at a faster rate than other neighborhoods.

In addition to these encouraging facts and figures, we learned all kinds of tips from organizations pooling their resources to form partnerships to achieve exciting projects. One of the most interesting opportunities coming up is the Centennial of Washington Women's Suffrage in 2010—the Washington Women's History Consortium is helping museums and historical societies around the state prepare for its commemoration. It's an exciting time to believe in the value of history!

### **For more information, see:**

"The Impact of Historical Organizations in King County," AKCHO,  
<http://www.akcho.org/pdf/AKCHOSurvey.pdf>

"The Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in Washington State,"  
Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation,  
State of Washington.  
[http://www.dahp.wa.gov/pages/HistoricSites/documents/  
EconomicDevStudySummaryReport\\_000.pdf](http://www.dahp.wa.gov/pages/HistoricSites/documents/EconomicDevStudySummaryReport_000.pdf)

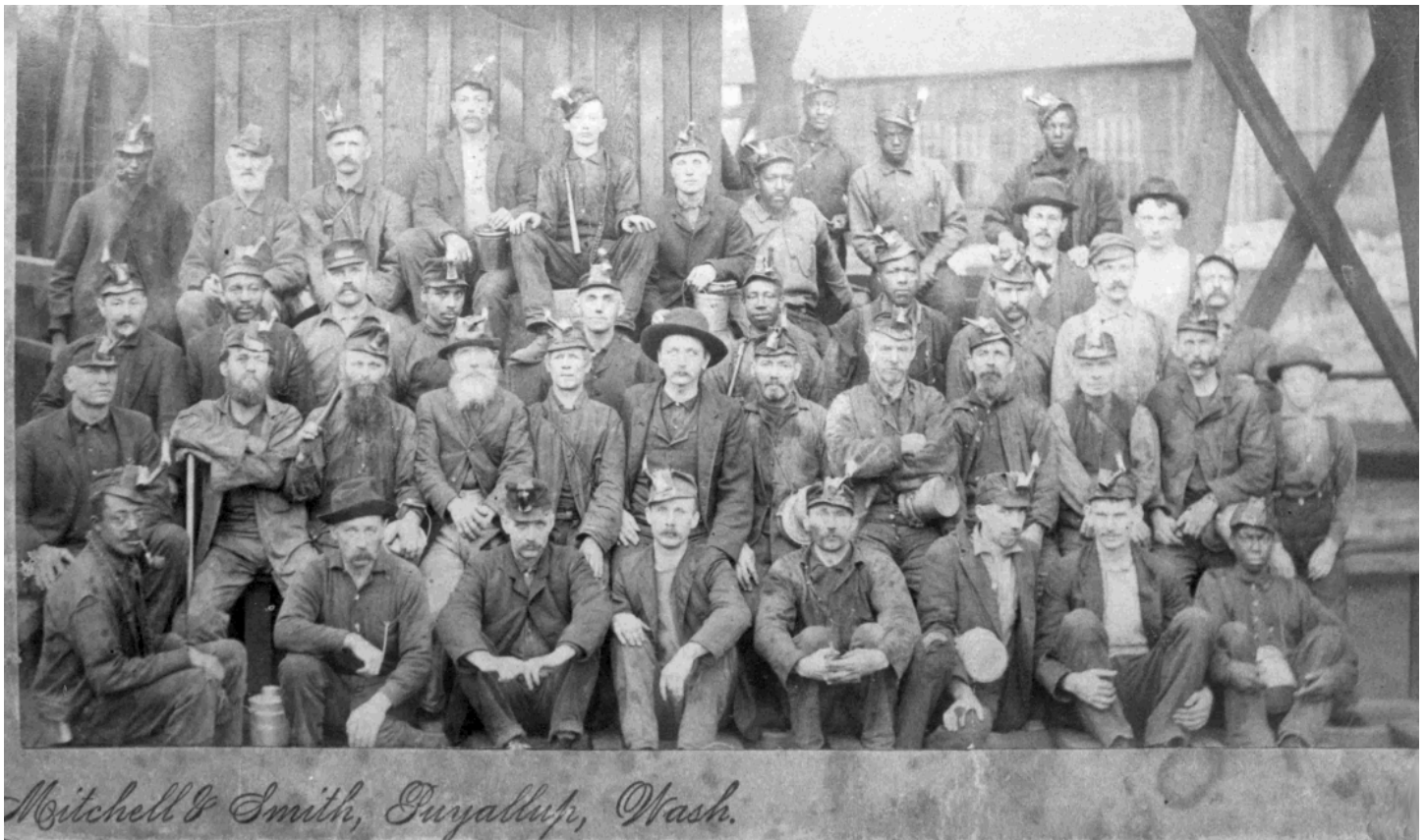
*Renton's Black Pioneers continued from page 1*

## The Great Exodus

The name of the first African American to settle in the Renton area is unfortunately not easily found in our historical record. It is clear from photographs however, that shortly after the end of the War Between the States in 1865, newly emancipated former slaves started to head north and west, and into the Renton area specifically, looking to start a new life. By the 1880s word about employment in the coal mines beneath Coal Creek and Newcastle had spread, and African Americans began to come to the area in search of financial opportunities. Many felt that even though racism could be found in the North as well as the South, they would have an easier time living among people who didn't have a recent tradition of slave ownership. The devastation suffered by the southern states due to the war also made finding work there difficult. Add to this the resentment of defeated white southerners of the newly freed slaves, often boiling over in acts of brutality, and you have more than enough reason for African Americans to migrate north. The Pacific Northwest was just beginning to blossom with newly formed towns, and labor was needed in the lumber and mining camps of Western Washington.

By the early years of the twentieth century, a small but thriving black community had come to be established in Renton. The main difficulty for African Americans moving to this area became the competition for jobs that they faced from the newly arriving immigrants from Europe. It seems that word of Renton's mines and mills had spread across the Atlantic Ocean as well, and African Americans traveling to Renton for work found themselves in a city populated by a myriad of Europeans, also wishing to make new lives for themselves as Americans.

Irene Grayson, who moved to Renton with her family in 1936, remembered the challenges facing the black community in a town with a large immigrant population: "There wasn't that much work here. The only common labor work was at the car shop where they made auto parts. Practically all the jobs went to Italians."<sup>1</sup> But Mrs. Grayson didn't recall race being much of an issue at the time. She explained that the whites in this area did not express the same racial biases toward her that she had experienced growing up in the South, because "practically all the whites here were the original northern people. There weren't many southern whites. I believe in being friendly with everybody. People seemed to get along well in Renton."<sup>2</sup>



Above: Newcastle miners, 1880. (Doreen Greggs Dabotten Collection, Renton History Museum, #1983.074.1780)

## Always Mind Your Mother

Irene Grayson's perspective as an African-American woman living in Renton is all the more unique when one discovers that when she died on May 10, 1995, she was one day past her 107<sup>th</sup> birthday. She had lived in Renton for more than 60 years. "Mother Grayson," as she came to be known in her later years, had settled in the Renton Highlands with her family during the Depression of the 1930s, because she felt that in the Highlands she would be able to grow what her family would need to eat, regardless of the economy. The Graysons had been living in Seattle when the economy collapsed in 1929. They had a little plot of land with a small house on it, but no work. "I couldn't stand it in Seattle," she said, "every Monday going to get a handout."<sup>3</sup>

It was that experience that drove her decision to relocate to the rural Highlands, where she was able to raise turkeys, pigs, and ducks, both to feed her family and to earn a few extra dollars. Mother Grayson's pioneer determination helped her to acquire these animals with help from neighbors, and make her small farm a success. Once her animals began to reproduce, she returned the original animal she had borrowed, and kept the offspring for food and barter. She took some of the livestock into Seattle where she went from place to place until she obtained the best price she could get for them. With the money from the sale of the animals added to \$25 from one of her employed children, she was able to put a \$75 down payment on her farm. Every time she managed to save up \$5 or \$10 she would put it toward her goal of paying off her land. In just over four years, she owned her ten acres free and clear - orchard, animals and all. In true pioneer fashion, her family had even cut the trees on her property for the wood to construct a new home.<sup>4</sup>

The African-American community in the Highlands expanded at the outbreak of World War II, when Boeing began hiring workers to build bombers and Pacific Car and Foundry began to build tanks. A federal housing project was established for employees working in the factories, so that they could live nearby. These duplexes and four-plexes were known as "victory cottages" during the war years.<sup>5</sup> African-American workers created a small community in a section of the

Highlands known sometimes as "the hilltop" or sometimes just "the country," although most of what is now known as the Highlands was made up of small farms like that of the Graysons.

Mother Grayson soon became a well-known and respected figure in the area. Along with her husband Albert, she built one of the first churches in the Highlands, where they each served as pastor. Other members of the hilltop community remembered that time as being one of a close-knit neighborhood, much like an extended family, where everyone helped one another get by. Since the folks on the hilltop would share their prosperity with one another, it was common for people to leave their homes unlocked without fear of being robbed.<sup>6</sup>

For the many years she and her husband lived in the area, Mother Grayson served as a living example of her religious faith. Upon her death, many people commented that she "embodied the values that kept the tight-knit community together for so many years."<sup>7</sup>



Above: During the Depression, many families moved out from Seattle to "the country" where it was easier to raise fruits, vegetables, and livestock. (Renton History Museum Collection, #2001.040.5537)



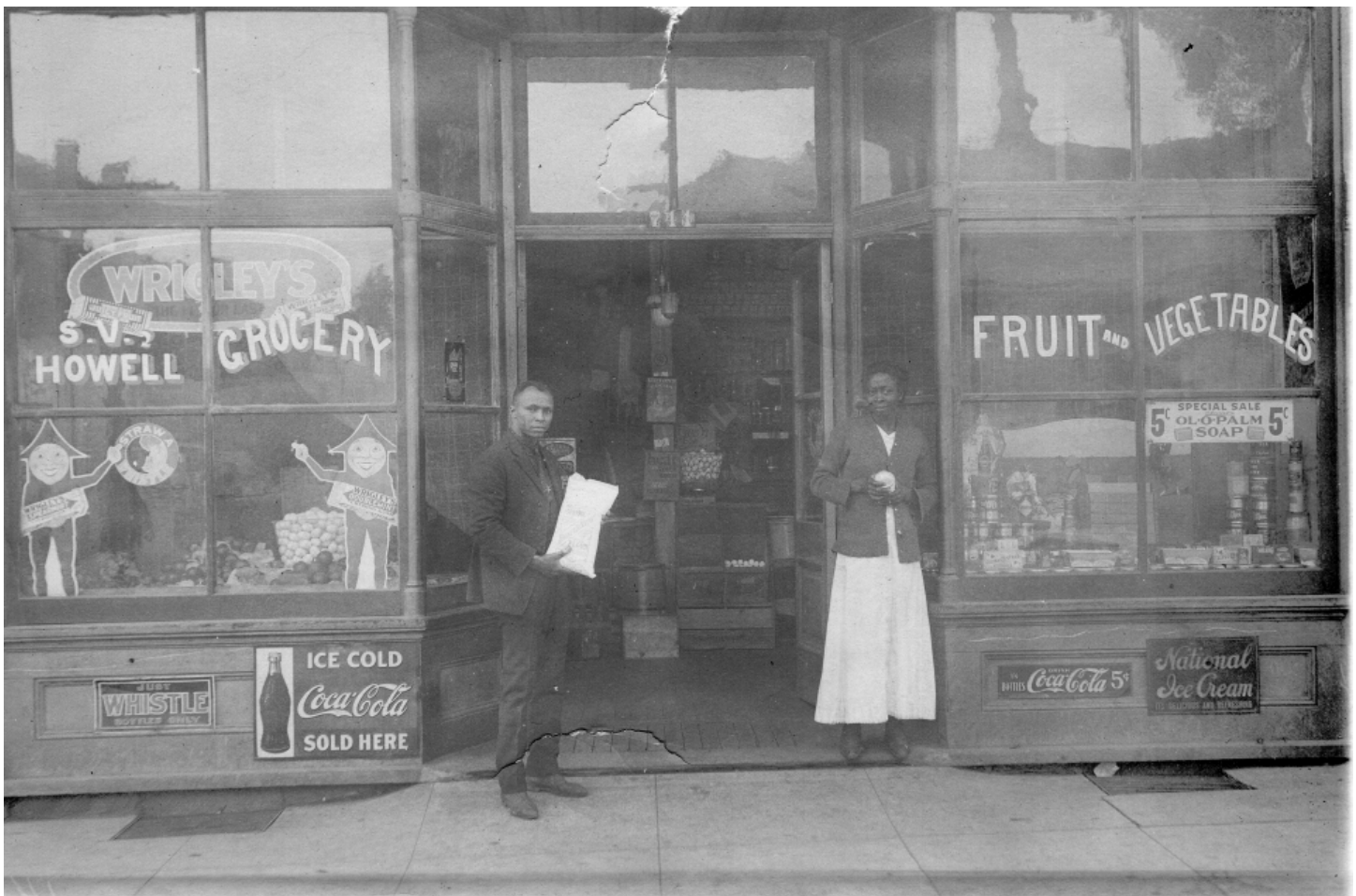
*Renton's Black Pioneer's continued from page 5*

## **An Extended Family Reunion**

While Mother Grayson did not dwell on racial tension between blacks and whites in those early years, many other black families who lived in the Renton Highlands federal housing projects recognized that they would not be welcomed if they attempted to move out into other neighborhoods in South King County. In some areas, white residents would petition to stop a black family from buying a home, or homeowners would raise prices to discourage potential black owners. John Barfield, who grew up in the community, recalled in an interview that he knew of black families who had similar difficulties when they tried to move out of the hilltop neighborhood. "There was no other concentration of black families," said Barfield. "I don't think you, as a black person, could live anywhere else in Renton and be comfortable."<sup>8</sup>

While both African Americans and whites lived in the Highlands housing projects, blacks often felt more comfortable settling in clusters and developing their own community within the projects. According to Mr. Barfield, living in a mostly black community gave African Americans a feeling of acceptance and security that they could not get anywhere else.<sup>9</sup>

When the housing projects were closed and some of the homes were sold, starting in 1956, many black Rentonians chose to move to Seattle, and the community that had been so close-knit began to pull apart. It was this trend that prompted Bernice Barfield, John Barfield's mother, to come up with the idea of having an annual reunion picnic for hilltop families. She was concerned that the only time that the former residents were getting back together was for funerals, and she wanted to create a more cheerful reason to come together. That first reunion in 1974 drew about 35 people. Once word spread about the picnic, those original hilltop residents began to invite their friends and relatives from outside the community as well, and the number of attendees began to grow; now it regularly draws over 100 attendees. Both Bernice and John Barfield have since passed away, unfortunately, but Al Talley, another long time Renton Resident, has worked to keep the tradition alive. The picnic is usually held on the second Saturday in August at Gene Coulon Park.



*Above: Unidentified couple shopping at Howell Grocery. (Renton History Museum Collection, #2001.040.5540)*

*Renton's Black Pioneers continued on page 7*

## Epilogue

Slowly but surely, the ethnic make-up of Renton has evolved over time. As more and more African-American families managed to improve their financial status, they began to migrate down the Rainier Avenue corridor from the Central District in Seattle to Renton in greater numbers. This is clearly visible in the racial diversity of Renton's institutions today. In 1977, the graduating class at Renton High School contained five African-American students.<sup>10</sup> According to statistics from 2005, black students at Renton High now make up 34.4% of the student body, the largest single ethnic group at the school.<sup>11</sup> The changes didn't just take place at the student body level either. In a 2002 article in the *Renton Reporter*, the front page picture shows Mr. Willie Fisher, at the time the second black principal at RHS.<sup>12</sup> Among Washington cities of 20,000 or more, only four cities—Lakewood, Tacoma, SeaTac, and University Place—have higher percentages of African-American residents than Renton.<sup>13</sup>

No one can say for sure what black pioneers like Mother Grayson would think about the flourishing African-American community that exists in Renton today. No doubt she wouldn't consider the struggles that she and her family endured to be any more worthy of praise than those of her friends and neighbors in the hilltop community. What we do know for sure is that those struggles on the part of the first African Americans to build a life in Renton helped make our city the prosperous, ethnically diverse city it is today. For that, we should all remember these pioneers with gratitude.

### Author's Note:

*The material for this story was taken heavily from interviews and articles published in local newspapers. The Renton History Museum has very few photographs and ephemera in our collection portraying the African-American experience in Renton. Most of the pictures that we do have are the ones which appear in this article. If anyone has photos or objects that they would be willing to donate portraying the lives of black Rentonians, please contact the museum. -TM*

1 *Renton Record Chronicle*, Wednesday, September 6, 1978. pg.18.

2 Ibid.

3 *Renton Record Chronicle*, May 21, 1982.

4 Ibid.

5 *Seattle Times*, August 11, 1988, n.p..

6 *Valley Daily News*, Sunday, May 14, 1995, pg. A3.

7 Ibid.

8 *Seattle Times*, August 11, 1988, n.p.

9 Ibid.

10 *Renton Reporter*, February 6, 2002. pg.1

11 Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction website, <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx>, 16 February 2006.

12 *Renton Reporter*, February 6, 2002. pg.1.

13 Ibid., pg.6.

# Volunteer Report

By Dorota Rahn, Volunteer and Education Coordinator



There are so many things going on at the museum at the same time that it is difficult to decide on priorities in reporting them. However, this time it is a little easier to report as we have just finished a calendar year and I can give you some statistics. According to our data, in 2006 49 volunteers contributed 1551 hours to the museum.

This statistic shows how much we rely on volunteers and how much more can be done the more people help us. It also demonstrates why we are so grateful to everybody who donates her or his skills and time to our museum. Some members support us by volunteering in addition to their monetary contributions, but we always need more volunteers to make the museum a better, more professional place. We are currently looking for new greeters and new tour guides. We give training and ongoing support to those who perform these functions. If you want to know more about these opportunities please contact me at 425.255.2330.

I hope that by now you have received the flyer for the 2007 Spring Speaker Program—maybe you’ve already joined us on the second Saturday of the month and on the second Tuesday of the month. In February Eva Abrams and Ray Egan presented their special Black History Month interpretations, both very thought-provoking.

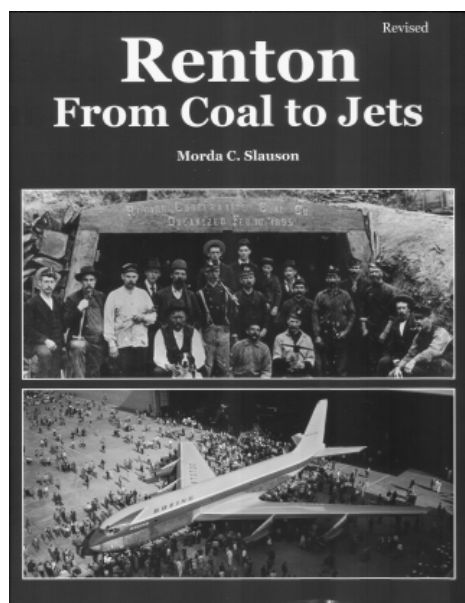
We also recently started a series of docent training sessions with two presenters from the Visual Understanding in Education (VUE) Institute’s Seattle office. They provided an introduction to their Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a student-centered, research-based education method that uses art to build capacities to observe, think, listen, and communicate. They explored, together with our tour guides, how VTS can be adapted for use in a history museum.

Our next docent training session will take place on the same Tuesdays as our Spring Speaker Program. They will last from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. followed by a half an hour break before the scheduled presentation. Invited speakers will present programs for Women’s History Month in March, immigrant issues in April, and Asian-Pacific American History Month in May. We welcome everybody to attend. There is no admission fee for our members.

I hope to see you soon at our programs!

## Gift Shop News

### ***RENTON—FROM COAL TO JETS* REPUBLISHED**



The Renton Historical Society has republished Morda C. Slauson’s *Renton—From Coal to Jets*, making a revised edition available to the public for the first time in ten years. This revised edition has been extensively edited and updated with photographs, an index, and a chronology of Renton events. The book is available for \$15.00 at the Renton History Museum or may be ordered online at [www.rentonhistory.org](http://www.rentonhistory.org).

A knowledgeable team of volunteers—Stan Greene, Clark Petersen, Carrie Bergquist, and Donald Custer—contributed their time and talents to completing this project. Local artist and Historical Society trustee Doug Kyes designed the new cover. *Renton—From Coal to Jets* represents the Renton Historical Society’s first publication registered with the Library of Congress. The book provides a historical overview of Renton from the time of the Duwamish Indians and Henry Tobin’s arrival in 1853, up through Captain Renton’s sawmill and other early businesses, early families, coal mining, and onto Boeing’s production.

Originally published in 1976 and funded by support from the Renton Rotary Club and the Greater Renton Chamber of Commerce, this newly revised edition was funded by the Renton Historical Society. *Renton—From Coal to Jets* is much in demand as a gift and reference book; copies have also been distributed free of charge to local libraries and to the Renton School District.



# Planned Giving Series

## Part 2: Life Insurance Policies

By Sandra Meyer, Endowment Chair

The December 2006 quarterly included an explanation of the ways in which retirement funds could be used for charitable giving to the Renton Historical Society Endowment Fund or any other charitable organization. In this article we look at how life insurance can play a role in planned giving. The following information is a version of information prepared by Planned Giving Services in Seattle. As always, if you have any questions regarding the specifics of the information provided below, contact your accountant or the Renton Historical Society's investment representative, Shane Klingenstein, toll-free at 1-888-891-8832.

Most people own life insurance, but very few realize that there is enormous potential for gifts of life insurance. This section discusses common ways to give life insurance to facilitate charitable gifts. The following ways of giving life insurance are listed in order of their value to the charity. In each instance, the tax benefits for the donor are also noted.

### A. Transfer Ownership of Paid-Up Policy

A gift of a paid-up policy is equivalent to an outright gift of cash, because the charity can, if it chooses, immediately surrender the policy for cash. More likely, it will retain the policy until the insured individual dies and then collect the death benefit. Meanwhile, the cash surrender value will probably continue to grow.

The donor is entitled to a charitable deduction for the lesser of (1) the replacement value (the current single premium cost of purchasing a policy with equivalent coverage), or (2) the adjusted cost basis. A life insurance policy is not a capital asset, such as securities or real estate, but rather an ordinary income asset. If a policy owner were to cash in a paid-up policy, the gain is potentially subject to a federal income tax rate as high as 35% (whereas if he or she were to sell long-term appreciated stock, the gain would be taxed at a maximum federal rate of 15%). When an ordinary income asset such as a paid-up life insurance policy is donated to a non-profit, however, the donor is not taxed on the gain; instead he or she receives a charitable deduction for the adjusted cost basis (or the replacement value, if less).

### B. Transfer Ownership of an Existing Policy on Which Premiums are Still Owed

If the policy is whole-life and has been in force for two or more years, it will probably have some cash value to the charity. If the donor continues to pay the premiums, the cash value will increase each year, and the charity will eventually collect the death benefit.

The donor is entitled to a charitable deduction for the cash value plus any prepaid premiums (called the "interpolated terminal reserve value") and for subsequent premium payments. If the interpolated terminal reserve value exceeds the donor's adjusted cost basis (which could happen if the policy has been owned for a number of years), the deduction is limited to the adjusted cost basis. The donor is entitled to a deduction for each premium payment whether the donor pays the premium directly to the insurance company or makes a contribution to the charity, which uses it to pay the premium. If the donor chooses the second option, he or she could contribute long-term appreciated securities instead of cash, thereby getting the double benefit of a charitable deduction plus avoiding tax on the capital gain.

### C. Purchase a New Policy Naming the Charity as Owner

Although such policies have no initial cash value, whole life or universal life policies will accumulate value, and all policies pay a death benefit if the insured dies while the policy is in force. The donor is entitled to a charitable deduction for premiums paid to the insurance company after ownership has been transferred to the charity and, of course, for any contributions made to the charity to cover the premiums. The donor should either name the charity as owner on the initial application, or pay the minimum required premium before transferring ownership. If the donor is the initial owner, pays an entire year's premium, and then transfers ownership, the initial charitable deduction will be limited to the cash surrender value, which will likely be zero. A charitable deduction is allowed for the full amount of the premium paid after the charity is named as owner.

### D. Name the Charity Primary or Co-Beneficiary of a Policy

If the policy owner keeps the policy in force and does not change the beneficiary, the charity will eventually receive the death benefit. The proceeds payable upon death are included in the policy owner's gross estate, but an estate tax charitable deduction is allowed for the entire amount paid to a charity. Consequently, no estate tax will be payable on the proceeds received by a charity. If an individual were named as beneficiary, the proceeds would be subject to estate tax, and the federal tax rate this year could be as high as 46%, depending on the size of the estate. In addition, Washington State estate taxes may also be owed. The policy owner may also name the charity as a co-beneficiary with others—either individuals or other charities—to share the death benefit; the estate of the policy owner/insured is still entitled to an estate tax charitable deduction.

## From the Collections Department...

By: Sarah Iles, Collection Manager



In the last newsletter I wrote about the Museum's progress on a Collections Management Assessment grant from the American Association of Museums (AAM). The self-study portion of the grant made us think about how helpful a Collection Plan would be. AAM defines a Collection Plan as: "a plan guiding the content of the collections that leads the staff in a coordinated and uniform direction over a period of years to refine and expand the value of the collections in a predetermined way." That definition is basically a fancy way of saying that a Collecting Plan will tell the museum what to collect and what not to collect.

It is our hope that this plan will allow us at the museum to do three things:

1. Wisely allocate remaining storage space.
2. Identify areas that are already satisfactorily represented.
3. Identify areas that are underrepresented.

The museum is currently operating almost at capacity in terms of storage space. This space crunch has forced us to be far more selective about what we take into the collections. Because of this, it is our goal to have the Collecting Plan spell out what we should and should not collect, as opposed to arbitrarily making these decisions on the fly. We want to make sure that our collecting practices reflect the best interests of the public we serve. Once the Collecting Plan is developed, it will be made available for the public to use as a reference.

Though we have not yet begun to develop this Collecting Plan, we have already identified some of the areas in the Collections that are both satisfactorily represented and underrepresented.

### Satisfactorily represented areas are:

- Clothing and hats
- Dolls
- Kerosene lamps
- Victrola records
- Woodworking tools

### Underrepresented areas are:

- Objects, Archives, and Photographs pertaining to ethnic groups
  - Objects, Archives, and Photographs pertaining to women's history/activities
- Most of all, we are looking for items that help tell the rich story of Renton and all its residents. Objects and photographs are used in exhibits and by researchers to convey Renton's history. The more connections and associations they have, the better. For an object, we love to know who used it, where it was used, and if there are any stories associated with it. It is these stories that truly make the items we have in our collections invaluable.

## Collection Snapshots

This toy dog on wheels is an excellent example of an object with connections and associations. The Steiff Company manufactured the dog and based on the button in its ear, we can positively date the dog to 1905-1940. We have further narrowed that date to around 1913 based on photographs of the dog and children. This dog was a gift to Charles L. Custer from Dr. Charles L. Dixon. As we can see from the pictures above, the dog spent many years providing fun and entertainment to many of the Custer-Lewis children.

*Below: Steiff Dog. (Charles L. Custer Collection, Renton History Museum, #2000.127.0029)*



*Left: Charles L. Custer and his Steiff dog, ca. 1913 (Renton History Museum Collection, #2000.127.8896)*



*Above: Bill Ann Lewis, Kathleen Lewis, and cousin Charles L. Custer with the dog, ca. 1918. (Renton History Museum, #2000.127.8237)*



## Notes Received

Referring to the Dedication page of the revised edition “Renton from Coal to Jets,” Lila Jean Tonda sent us a Thank You card with the added message:

*“Your tribute to Ernie has put a special joy in my life. On behalf of the Tonda family, and myself, I can never thank you enough for this special honor.”*

Kathy Argano McKnight and Mario Tonda cleared up the mystery of the two men in the December quarterly’s Centennial Snapshot:

*“I am finally responding with regard to the December issue of the Quarterly Newsletter and the photo of the Renton Rotary Club Christmas party (#5473). I do not know who the fellow is on Santa’s lap, but Santa was my Dad, Lewis Argano. Dad played Santa for the residents of Renton for about ten years. He used to be in the window of the Renton Hardware and Furniture store located on the southeast side of Third Avenue and Wells street. I have many fond memories of when Dad played Santa. When I was a junior and senior in high school I was his helper and would guide the children in to see him.”*

/s/ Kathryn Argano McKnight

Mario Tonda also identified Lewis Argano as Santa and Alden See, Jr. as the man on Santa’s lap.

Referring to the article in the December quarterly about Agnes Edwards, Mildred Thurston sent us a nice letter that read in part:

*“It is with a great deal of pride that you featured my mother, Agnes Edwards.... She was a wonderful mother and a true example of being a young widow determined to support us three children through great sacrifice. However, we never felt neglected or unloved because of this. We were lovingly disciplined and taught the values and responsibilities of life.”*

Louise George asked us to let our readers know that the Renton High School Old Timers Alumni Association will be holding their Annual Reunion and Banquet for Classes 1918 through 1946 at the Holiday Inn Renton on May 20, 2007. Reservation Chairperson is Irene Cleven at 206.772.2758. The Alumni Association has been a faithful contributor to the Renton Historical Society, and we wish them a successful reunion.

## Contributions to the Mezzanine Project

Frances Barnes  
William Bauder  
Donna J. Bausano  
Gloria Bird  
William & Patricia Borek  
Helenanne Botham  
Ruth Boydston  
Dorlene Bressan  
Mary Delaurenti Chamblin  
Dan & Laura Clawson  
Zena Cochran  
Bert & Shirley Custer  
Trudy & Robert Dasovick  
Phyllis Davey  
Edwin & Claudia Gillispie  
Don & Judy Gunderson  
Agnes Hansen  
Martin & Marilyn Hemmann  
Robert & Jane Hendrickson  
Bruce & Sarah Jane Hisey  
Jean Hobart  
Mildred Mimi Holma  
Alduina Kauzlarich  
Pauline Kirkman  
Olga Lewis  
Charles (Cash) & Sandra Lundberg  
Mary Ann Mason  
Naomi Mathisen  
Judith Matson  
Ted & Gerry McLendon  
Wesley & Velma Melville  
Peter & Hazel Newing  
Rich & Becky Nickels  
Keith M. Pearson, M.D.  
Raymond Petermeyer  
David Pickett with employer matching gift  
David & Mary Pugh  
Sally Rochelle  
Harvey Sandahl, Jr.  
Bettijane & Jerome Shepard  
Louise Starkel  
George & Frances Subic  
Alma Taylor  
Betty Warren  
James & Mary Williams  
Pearl Wolf  
Robert & Gilda Youngquist

### **\$100 & Over**

Glenn Anderson (with Boeing Matching Gift)  
Kirk Mathewson  
Nancy Fairman  
Joyce Leas McIver  
Jim & Char Baker  
Rich Wagner & Andee Jorgensen  
Jean Tonda  
Jack Morrison

### **Over \$1000**

**TO HONOR LENO & ZAFIRA AZZOLA**  
Olga Azzola

### **Contributions to the General Fund**

Noah Katka (United Way)

### **Honoring Birthday of**

Rachel Mitchell Beatty  
from Louise George

### **Contributions to the Endowment Fund**

The Boeing Matching Gift  
(Lloyd & Fumiko Hoshide)

### **Over \$100**

Lloyd & Fumiko Hoshide  
(with Boeing Matching Gift)

## New Members

*Frank Aliment  
Robin Baches  
Frances Barnes  
John & Jean Holman  
Mary Lou Lane  
Elizabeth P. Stewart  
Gary & Dorothy Walls  
Milton G. Fiene  
Marsh Remillard  
Mark & Kelly Malleck family  
David Schmitt*

## New Life Members

*Barbara & Ed Nilson*

## Membership Notice

Membership Renewal Notices were mailed out in November. Approximately 100 members have not yet paid their 2007 dues. If you have a question regarding whether you have paid, please call Daisy afternoons, Tuesday-Friday, 425.255.2330.

### 2007 Membership Rates

Student/Teacher Individual	\$12
Senior Individual	\$12
Individual	\$20
Senior Couple	\$20
Family	\$30
Patron Benefactor	\$100
Business	\$100
Corporate	\$100
Life Membership	\$500
<i>*One time fee. Lifetime Memberships will be transferred to the living spouse.</i>	

## Join the Renton Historical Society Today!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City:State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ + 4 ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Please make checks payable to the Renton Historical Society.**

VISA/MASTERCARD # \_\_\_\_\_ Ex.Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please share your e-mail address with us: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please send me a volunteer application form. (32/1)

Mail To: Membership Secretary, Renton Historical Society  
235 Mill Avenue South, Renton, Washington 98057-2133

Please Choose Membership Category & Any Donation You Wish To Make:

- ☐ Student/Teacher Individual(\$12) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Senior Individual (\$12) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Individual (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Senior Couple (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Family (\$30) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Patron Benefactor (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Business (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Corporate (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Life (\$500) *One Time Only*  
(partially tax deductible) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ General Fund Donation \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Endowment Fund Donation \_\_\_\_\_
- In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

denotes former Society Life Member



# Obituaries

(November 15 to February 15)

denotes former Society member



**Marion Spencer DeSanto**

**Maxine Benson**

**Roy Niemi**

**Henrietta J. Waffle**

**John P. Marshall**

**Rosemary Ruth Brt**

**Zita M. Noll**

**Linda Fjeld**

**Leon Woodworth**

**Margaret "Jean" Bruce**

**Jessie M. Sayler**

**Steven G. Elliott**

**Anne I. Butko**

**John M. Gillingham**

**Earl Clymer**

**Inez Merritt**

**Marylou Giner**

**Mary Starkovich Boyden**

**Clifford Hanson**

**Betty Minkler**

**Velma Sheridan**

**Kevin P. Marlotty**

**Louis DeHart**

**Roger Randall**

**Homer Crookston**

**June Hebner Cooper**

**Jean Haselton**

**Berniece Thornton Schwartz**

**Albert Lee Vaughn**

**Ernest Heinz**

**Roy White**

**Vera Enghusen**

**Shirley Walimaki**

**James Fawcett**

**Eleanor Osgoodby**

**William A. White**

**Mildred "Jane" Bergquist**

**Ruth Schultz**

**Marie Codiga**

**Richard Armstrong**

**Theda Powell**

**Mary Healy**

**Richard Armstrong**

**Jesse Tanner**

**Ann Belmondo**

**Audrey G. Weathers**

**Shirley Culjak**

**Domenic Carpine, Jr.**

**Josephine M. Mathewson**

## Memorials

Over \$100

**Alex Rivily**

*Donna Rivily*

**Earl Clymer**

*Terry & Dennis Higashiyama*

**William A. White**

*Jim & Stephani White*

made through the Renton  
Community Foundation

**Earl Clymer**

*Doug & Sonja Kyes; Jim & Joy  
Poff; Warren Barber & Fontes,  
P.S.*

## Earl Clymer – Former Renton Mayor

Earl Clymer, Renton Mayor 1988 – 1996 died December 20, 2006 at the age of 81. He was a descendant of a pioneer family whose homestead was the site of one of Renton's first schools and lived in Renton all his life. Mr. Clymer was a lifetime member and supporter of the Renton Historical Society. He was involved with the construction of the Renton Senior Activity Center, the Renton Community Center, Maplewood Golf Course, and Gene Coulon Memorial Park.

## Jesse Tanner – Former Renton Mayor

Jesse Tanner, Renton Mayor 1996 – 2004 died February 6, 2007 at the age of 79. He was a member of the Renton Historical Society. Mr. Tanner is remembered for working diligently towards the betterment of the city of Renton. He oversaw the purchase of the new Renton City Hall, completion of a performing arts center, the dedication of the Veterans Park, the construction of the Henry Moses Aquatic Center and skate park, and the development of the regional Metro transit center in the downtown area.



# Rentonians Remembered

**Lee Anderson**

*Florence Murray*

**Ann Belmondo**

*Louise George; Louise Bertozzi*

**Emery "Bob" Benson**

*Beth & Mike Potoshnik; George & Frances Subic; Richard & Corinne Lucotch; Robert & Gilda Youngquist*

**Maxine Fullerton**

**Benson**

*George & Frances Subic; Richard & Corinne Lucotch; Robert & Gilda Youngquist*

**Mildred "Jane"**

**Bergquist**

*Dan & Gloria Cartwright; Greg & Carrie Bergquist; Lila Jean Tonda*

**Mary Starkovich**

**Boyden**

*Betty Sipila*

**Dorothy C. Bruce**

*Harold Bruce*

**Margaret Jean Bruce**

*Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Harold Bruce*

**Angelo Bulgarelli**

*Dan & Gloria Cartwright*

**Anne Butko**

*Verna Koshak*

**Gene Christman**

*Jason & Gail Valian*

**Earl Clymer**

*Ron & Sharon Clymer; Mrs. Gwen Smith; C. Floyd Hughes; Lila Houser; Ivona Little; Winnie, Dan, Jerry & Yvonne, Aldunia Kauzlarich; Robert & Gilda Youngquist; Wyman & Vicki Dobson; McLendon Hardware*

**Marie Codiga**

*Greg & Carrie Bergquist; Sam & Terri Simone*

**June Hebner Cooper**

*Louise George; Bruce & Sarah Jane Hisey; John & Eleanor Bertagni*

**Homer Crookston**

*Bill & Annie White*

**James R. Fawcett**

*Anne White & family; Beth & Mike Potoshnik*

**Marie E. Fiene**

*Vaughan Miller*

**Diane Ford**

*Florence Murray*

**Aaron Goodwin**

*Charles Goodwin, John & Joyce Peterson*

**Eva Goodwin**

*Charles Goodwin, John & Joyce Peterson*

**Lorraine Goodwin**

*Charles Goodwin, John & Joyce Peterson*

**Amelia Gotti Gordon**

*Ivona Little*

**Ann Hamlin**

*Florence Murray*

**George Hannah**

*Florence Murray*

**Louise Hannah**

*Florence Murray*

**Mary Anne Healy**

*Katie Gilligan*

**Frederick B. Leviton**

*Greg & Sandra Taylor*

**Josephine Mathewson**

*Brian & Annabelle Berg*

**Dale W. Merritt**

*Judith Zanga*

**Inez Merritt**

*Judith Zanga*

**Betty Elliott Minkler**

*Florence Delaurenti; Louise George; Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Bill & Annie White; John & Eleanor Bertagni; Lila Houser; Robert & Roberta Logue*

**James Murray**

*Florence Murray*

**Shirley Newing**

*Peter & Hazel Newing*

**Roy "Finn" Niemi**

*Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Richard & Corinne Lucotch*

**Barney Poli**

*Florence Murray*

**Dan Poli**

*Florence Murray*

**Estrina Poli**

*Florence Murray*

**Berniece Thornton**

**Schwartz**

*Louise George; George & Frances Subic; Jane Subic Haug & family; Sally Jo Kimbel*

**Virginia Secrest**

*Charles Goodwin, John & Joyce Peterson*

**Robert Strugar**

*Richard & Corinne Lucotch; Beth & Mike Potoshnik; John & Eleanor Bertagni; Robert & Margaret Wicks; Robert & Roberta Logue*

**Jesse Tanner**

*Louise Bertozzi; John & Eleanor Bertagni*

**LeMay Weiding**

*Katie Gilligan*

**William A. White**

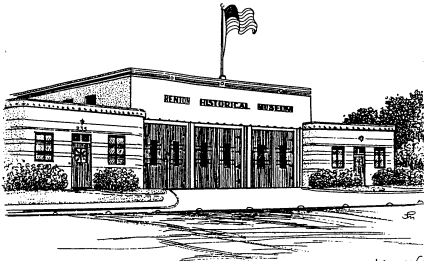
*Don & Lois Pritchard; Florence Delaurenti; Louise George; Douglas & Dorothy Pritchard; Ron & Barbara Dengel; Debbie & Jim Easton; Jody & Steve Brown; Lisa & Bob Kalina; Beth & Mike Potoshnik*

**Leon Woodworth**

*RHS Class of 1944*

**Emma Wyknenko**

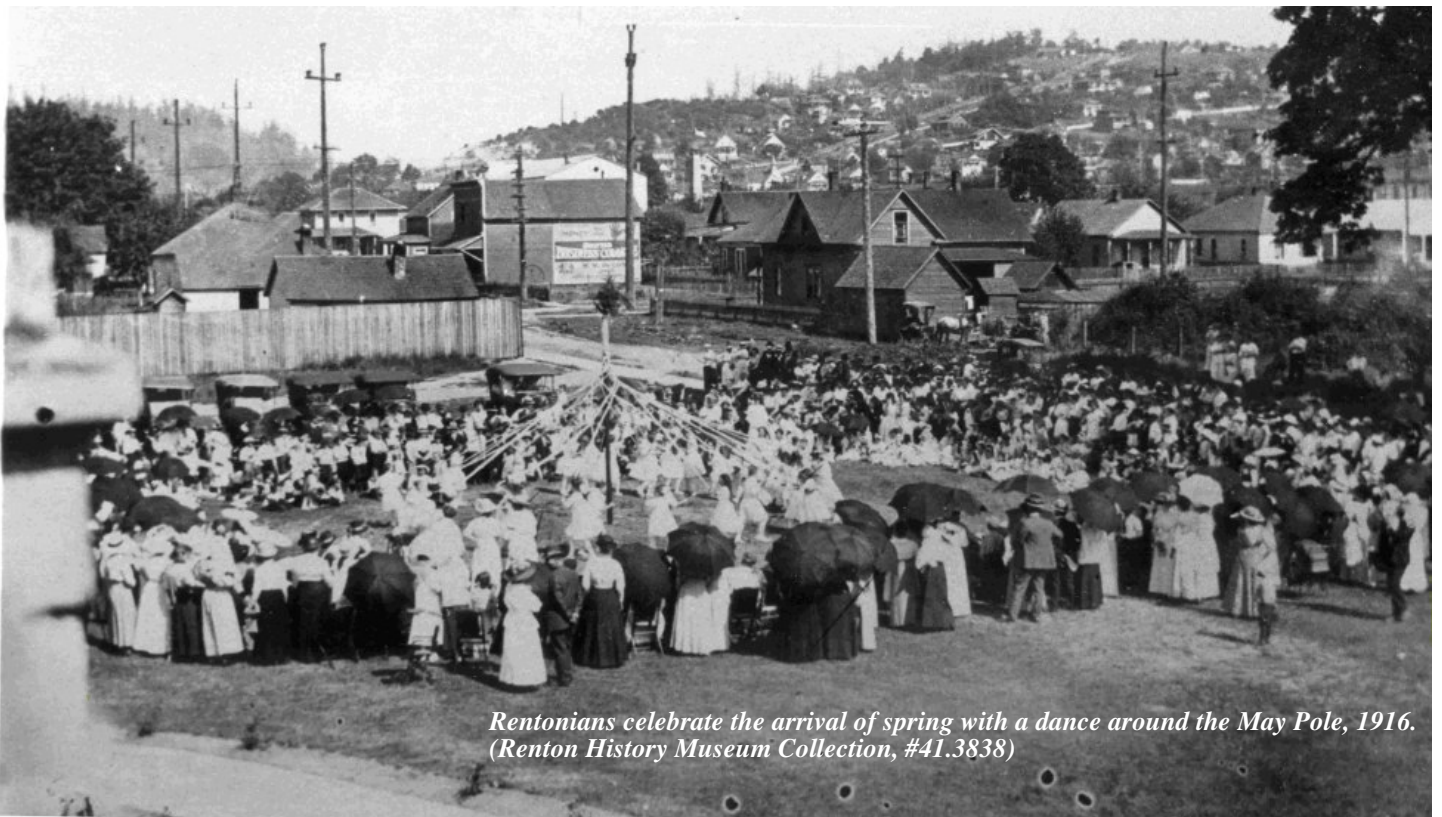
*Gilda (Jill) Youngquist*



**Renton History Museum**  
235 Mill Avenue South  
Renton, WA 98057

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# In Hindsight...



*Rentonians celebrate the arrival of spring with a dance around the May Pole, 1916.  
(Renton History Museum Collection, #41.3838)*